Journal of the Short Story in English
Les Cahiers de la nouvelle

42 | Spring 2004
Varia

"Let me talk now": Chronotopes and Discourse in *The Bear*

Winifred Farrant Bevilacqua

Electronic version
URL: http://journals.openedition.org/jsse/356
ISSN: 1969-6108

Publisher
Presses universitaires d'Angers

Printed version
Date of publication: 1 March 2004
Number of pages: 33-59
ISSN: 0294-04442

Electronic reference
Winifred Farrant Bevilacqua, « "Let me talk now": Chronotopes and Discourse in *The Bear* », *Journal of the Short Story in English* [Online], 42 | Spring 2004, Online since 05 August 2008, connection on 03 May 2019. URL : http://journals.openedition.org/jsse/356

"Let me talk now": Chronotopes and Discourse in The Bear

Winifred Farrant Bevilacqua

EDITOR'S NOTE

Traduit par Kristell Guillou et Lise-Anne Pantin

The better a person understands the degree to which he is
externally determined... the closer to home he comes tounderstanding and exercising his real freedom.Mikhail Bakhtin, Notes Made in 1970-1971
When you hear a man confessing, you know he is not yet free.
Saint Augustine, Expositions on the Psalms

1 In *The Bear* William Faulkner's continuing experimentation with a multidimensional narration is accompanied by a new vision of issues relating to individual choice and responsibility. Believing that Faulkner and Mikhail Bakhtin share a similar awareness of how different conceptions of time and space shape behavior and thought and are important elements in the creation of a literary text, I draw on Bakhtin's theories of the chronotope to analyze how the narrative in *The Bear* shifts from one conceptualization of time and space to another and how these shifts generate reformulations of fundamental ideas about identity, society, and morality. I also draw on Bakhtin's ideas about the interaction between self and other and about the role of discourse in the ideological becoming of a human being to foreground the ethical dimension of the story.[1]

2 Bakhtin argues that the chronotope is not simply a backdrop for a narrative but acts as a field of representation that strongly influences the kind of events that can occur within it, what the characters might possibly think and what actions they might plausibly

perform, and how the dynamics of a society and the processes of history are envisioned in the text. The centrality of the chronotope in the creation of meaning is made eminently clear when Bakhtin writes that the chronotope, "functioning as the primary means for materializing time in space, emerges as a center for concretizing representation, as a force giving body to the entire novel. All the novel's abstract elements -- philosophical and social generalizations, ideas, analyses of cause and effect -- gravitate toward the chronotope and through it take on flesh and blood, permitting the imaging power of art to do its work" (*DI* 250).[2] Each chronotope is independent but in a single work there may be a number of different chronotopes that enter into dialogic relationship because "chronotopes are mutually inclusive, they co-exist, they may be interwoven with, replace or oppose one another, contradict one another or find themselves in ever more complex interrelationships" (*DI* 252).

3 The spatiotemporal structures shaping the primary field of representation in the wilderness sections of *The Bear* are close to those Bakhtin discerns in the chronotope of the destruction of the idyll. To properly illustrate this chronotope, it is necessary to consider it in relation to the idyllic chronotope. In that chronotope, unity of place and continuity of time are fundamental principles. The special relationship to place is frequently developed through the theme of man in harmonious relationship with nature and in the image of a little spatial corner of the world sufficient unto itself and inhabited by a tightly-knit community with no alien intruders. There is no real sense of the linear flow of historical time or of the unrepeatability of events. Although individuals change as a consequence of the progress from childhood to youth, maturity, and old age, each member of the community develops on the model of the forebears in the same surroundings and under the same conditions. The "blurring of all the temporal boundaries made possible by a unity of place also contributes in an essential way to the creation of the cyclic rhythmicalness of time so characteristic of the idyll." Another essential point is that the idyll has room for only "a few of life's basic realities" and rigorously excludes "the central unrepeatable events of biography and history" (*DI* 224-225).

4 In the chronotope of the destruction of the idyll, the idyllic world, whether presented directly in certain episodes or only alluded to, tends to be viewed with nostalgia as the repository of an imagined wholeness that has been lost. Most often, "the deep *humanity* of idyllic man himself and the humanity of his human relationships are foregrounded as is the *wholeness* of idyllic life, its organic link with nature, with special emphasis on the unmechanized nature of idyllic labor" (*DI* 233). Such qualities, however, are never seen in isolation for "opposed to this little world, a world fated to perish, there is a great but abstract world, where people are out of contact with each other, egotistically sealed-off from each other, greedily practical; where labor is differentiated and mechanized, where objects are alienated from the labor that produced them" (*DI* 234).

5 The first three sections of *The Bear* recount a series of hunting parties on a tract of wilderness land owned by Major de Spain during the years between 1877, when ten-year-old Ike McCaslin is first allowed to join the group, and 1883. The hunters' ostensible goal is to kill the legendary Old Ben, a formidably intelligent bear who always manages to elude them. Ike is initiated into the rituals of the hunt by the aging Sam Fathers, a former slave on the McCaslin plantation who is the son of the Chickasaw Indian chief Ikkemotubbe and a quadroon slave woman. By scrupulously following Sam's teachings, Ike manages to locate and observe the bear which by that time has come to symbolize for

him the spirit of the wilderness. After several years, Sam finds a large dog wandering in the woods and, certain it is the only animal capable of cornering the bear, trains it without taming its wild spirit. Ike names the dog Lion and shares Sam's sense of its importance. The hunters finally track down Old Ben and in the climactic scene he and Lion are locked in a death struggle when Boon Hogganbeck, a part-Indian member of the hunting party, leaps on the bear and stabs him in the heart. At that very moment, Sam falls to the ground in a seizure from which he does not recover. Ike and Boon stay in camp with him and when he dies they bury him, as he had wished, according to the Indian rites of his lost heritage.

6 All these events are presented through Ike's idealizing perspective which is grounded in the spatial and temporal categories and the values and emotions linked to the idyllic chronotope. Ike is impressed by the remoteness of the Big Woods from the town and farms, seeing it as a magical, walled-in world sufficient unto itself where he can be reborn to a new life. He is convinced that the Big Woods "did not change, and, timeless, would not," that Old Ben is "absolved of mortality" and that the hunters will participate in "the ancient and unremitting contest according to the ancient and unremitting rules" in a "yearly pageant-rite" of which "there would be a next time, after and after" (192, 195, 184, 186).[3] Such ideas shape his sense of his own identity and of his participation in a communal heritage. Indeed, he feels he has inherited not only the ritual of the hunt but even the bear itself "which had run in his listening and loomed in his dreams since before he could remember and which therefore must have existed in the listening and the dreams of his cousin and Major de Spain and even old General Compson before they began to remember in their turn" (192). Thus perceived, time in the world of the hunt "is cyclical and personal, discontinuous with the linear and objective-collective time of civilization... experienced partly as the rhythmic, circular turn of the seasons, and partly as the biological-moral movement of birth-development-decline-death."[4]

7 In young Ike's mind, the community of hunters preserves the aura of an idyllic golden age when men lived as brothers and were not tainted by greed for possession or power and when true manhood was characterized by a cluster of noble virtues including pride and humility, pity and courage, mastery of the self and the will to endure. By common agreement, the members of this community are ranked according to their skills as hunters rather than by their economic or social status: Walter Ewell's sharp eye and steady hand earn him a higher position than the aristocratic General Compson and Major de Spain. The most important figure is Sam Fathers who incarnates the American version of humanity's primary link to nature. He can read the wilderness correctly, speak the Native American language, enter into communion with animal life, perform the rites of initiation, be the spiritual guide of the hunt.

8 Also evocative of the idyllic chronotope, where "pairs" like youth and age, children and graves embody the idea of the constant growth and renewal of life, are the close ties between Ike and Sam. As their relationship evolves from lessons in hunting and surviving in the woods to a deeper form of mentoring, Ike assumes the guise of the "disciple being taught and formed in a traditional and archaic wisdom by a charismatic spiritual Father who is especially qualified for the task and who hands on not only a set of skills or a body of knowledge, but a mastery of *life.* In particular, Sam inculcates in him "a certain way of being aware, of being in touch not just with natural objects, with living things, but with the cosmic spirit, with the wilderness itself regarded almost as a supernatural being."[5]

9 Set in revealing tension with Ike's idealizing vision, many elements of the narrative show that this world is actually "riddled with decay, its compact isolation and self-imposed limits destroyed, surrounded on all sides by an alien world and itself already half-alien" (*DI* 103). Farmers and woodcutters are hacking at the Big Woods, it is being spoiled by roads and railroads, the hunters are alienated from it. With the exception of Sam and Ike, none of them envisions "the conjoining of human life with the life of nature, the unity of their rhythm" (*DI* 226). Ike's cousin Cass Edmonds has gone through the same phases of initiation as Ike; yet after each period of hunting he apparently has no difficulty returning to the McCaslin commissary to resume such duties as "rationing the tenants and the wage-hands for the coming week" and to continue transforming woodland into profitable farmland (241). Major de Spain is far from rejecting individual ownership of nature in his role as the sole proprietor of the hunting camp and the single arbiter of its destiny. Even Ike's moment of ecstatic communion with the bear paradoxically takes place only after the bear leads him back to the site where he had abandoned his compass and watch, instruments belonging to the world of history.

10 Most importantly, the "deep humanity" which should characterize social interactions is strongly contradicted in the relationship between blacks and whites. Although certain racial codes are relaxed for the fortnight in the woods, there is no significant transgression of the paternalistic Southern principle of permitting close contact between the races as long as the blacks maintain a position of inferiority. Living arrangements are rigorously segregated since the black servants sleep on the floor in the kitchen which is separate from the house. The whites are highly praised for their woodland skills while the skills possessed by the blacks are practically unrewarded. Tennie's Jim is an expert in the woods but his role in the hunt is decidedly subordinate. He does not have a gun, has not been baptized with the blood of an animal, does not belong to the circle of "the best of all talking." His sole task is to control the dogs until the chase begins. Sam might seem to be an exception to the prevailing racial distinctions yet he lives alone in a cabin on the edge of the camp and knows he has never been truly free in the white man's woods, or anywhere else. He owns nothing, not even Lion, despite the fact that he found him and trained him to hunt the bear; he never questions the wishes of the white men; he is not treated as an equal. Significantly, when the hunters approach him after he has collapsed while witnessing the killing of Old Ben, he murmurs "Let me out master,... Let me go home" (234).

11 The breakup of the idyllic world, physically as well as spiritually, is made explicit in section five when Ike returns to the hunting camp two years after Sam's death, just before the Big Woods is to be cut down. In a tiny patch of protected land surrounding Sam's grave, he comes upon an old rattlesnake that he salutes as "Grandfather" seeing in it the last embodiment of the wilderness spirit. As he rides out of the woods on the little log-train that had once seemed harmless to him, he muses on the fate of the wilderness and on his own eviction from it: "It was as though the train... had brought with it into the doomed wilderness even before the actual axe the shadow and portent of a new mill not even finished yet and the rails and ties which were not even laid; and he knew now what he had known as soon as he saw Hoke's this morning but had not yet thought into words: why Major de Spain had not come back, and that after this time he himself, who had come to see it one time other, would return no more" (306-7).

* * *

12 Ike does not leave his idyllic world behind, it is taken from him; yet what it has meant to him remains such a part of him that he cannot easily adjust to the tangled complexities of late nineteenth-century Mississippi plantation culture. On the borderline between two ways of viewing life, nature, spirituality, time and eternity, he truly must, in Bakhtin's terms,

> educate or re-educate himself for life in a world that is, from his point of view, enormous and foreign; he must make it his own, domesticate it... This educative process is connected with a severing of all previous ties with the idyllic, that is, it has to do with man's *expatriation*. Here the process of a man's re-education is interwoven with the process of society's breakdown and reconstruction, that is, with historical process. (*DI* 234)

13 Ike fully understands how radically different reality is from his dream of a communal brotherhood when he re-examines the plantation ledgers in the McCaslin commissary one December night in his sixteenth year, shortly after the death of Sam Fathers, the event which marked the conclusion of his idyllic moment. The ledgers are combined account books, diaries, and journals containing personal data about the McCaslin slaves as well as records of the debits and credits of the slaves' sharecropping descendants. The commissary itself is saturated with history since all the economic transactions and many of the personal interactions between blacks and whites have traditionally taken place here from slaveholding times until the present. Before opening the ledgers on this occasion, Ike believed they would reveal a record "of all his people, not only the whites but the black one too... and of the land which they had all held and used in common and fed from and on and would continue to use in common without regard to color or titular ownership." He also believed that "what the old books contained would be after all these years fixed immutably, finished, unalterable, harmless" (256). Instead, deciphering the faded, cryptic entries in the ledgers will shock him into greater awareness of the nature of the ideological system of the racial and economic hierarchy of agrarian capitalism in the South.

14 Faulkner dramatizes this experience in terms of the chronotope of the threshold:

> the chronotope of *crisis* and *break* in a life. The word "threshold" itself already has a metaphorical meaning in everyday usage... and is connected with the breaking point of a life, the moment of crisis, the decision that changes a life... In this chronotope, time is essentially instantaneous; it is as if it has no duration and falls out of the normal course of biographical time. (*DI* 248)

15 That Ike's examination of the ledgers is a decisive turning point in his life is stressed by the reiterated phrases "He was sixteen then... Then he was sixteen" and by the description of how he "got the commissary key from McCaslin's room after midnight while McCaslin was asleep and with the commissary door shut and locked behind him..., he leaned above the yellowed page and *thought*" (257, emphasis added). Both observations emphasize his position between innocence and maturity and his desire to step over that borderline by discovering the truth about his family's past and reflecting on its implications in his own destiny. This process will require him "to become a new, unprecedented type of human being" (*SpG* 23).[6]

16 Equally important in understanding Ike's emotional and ideological transformation are Bakhtin's theories about how the individual consciousness takes shape in an environment permeated by voices expressing a variety of social, political, ethical and religious values. The forms of discourse basic to an individual's development are those Bakhtin designates as "authoritative" and "internally persuasive." Authoritative discourse is fused with

political or insitutional power, must be accepted whole or rejected in toto, and does not concede the validity of any word, view or evaluation of the world that does not overlap with its own ideological positions:

> The authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it. The authoritative word is located in a distanced zone, organically connected with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher. It is, so to speak, the word of the fathers. (*DI* 342)

17 In contrast, internally persuasive discourse is important not for its authority but because it strikes our consciousness as something that needs to be taken into account. Once assimilated, it does not close in on itself but remains open to other voices and positions and can thus become the basis for organizing a personal approach to life, a personalized discourse:

> Internally persuasive discourse... is, as it is affirmed through assimilation, tightly interwoven with 'one's own word.' ... Its creativity and productiveness consist precisely in the fact that such a word awakens new and independent words, that it organizes masses of our words from within... More than that, it enters into an intense interaction, a *struggle* with other internally persuasive discourses. Our ideological development is just such an intense struggle within us for hegemony among various available verbal and ideological points of view, approaches, directions and values. (*DI* 345-346)

18 The "revelations" Ike finds in the ledgers arise from his reflections on certain recorded events and on his imaginative identification with those figures from his past who "took substance and even a sort of shadowy life with their passions and complexities too as page followed page and year year; all there, not only the general and condoned injustice and its slow amortization but the specific tragedy which had not been condoned and could never be amortized" (254). Ike focuses in particular on his grandfather Carothers McCaslin's relationship with his slaves Eunice and Thucydus, their daughter Tomasina, and her son Terrel. A factual entry about Eunice

19 *Eunice Bought by Father in New Orleans 1807 $650. dolars. Marrid to Thucydus 1809 Drownd in Crick Cristmas Day 1832*

20 is followed by a disagreement between Ike's father Buck and his Uncle Buddy about her fate. Buck accepts the idea of an accidental death (*23 Jun 1833 Who in hell ever heard of a niger drownding him self*) while Buddy insists it was a suicide (*Aug 13th 1833 Drownd herself*) (256).

21 Searching for a solution to this enigma, Ike reads on, but finds only entries about Tomasina, who died giving birth to the baby known only as Tomey's Terrel in June 1833, and about Terrel himself, to whom Old Carothers left a one-thousand-dollar legacy to be delivered to him by Buck and Buddy when he reached the age of twenty-one. Pondering on this substantial legacy, Ike infers that Terrel must have been Carothers' son. Initially, he condemns his grandfather for refusing to say *"My son to a nigger... Even if My son wasn't but just two words."* Then he wonders if between Carothers and Tomasina there had been *"Some sort of love. Even what he would have called love: not just an afternoon's or a night's spittoon"* (258). Next, he thinks about his grandfather's relationship to Tomasina's parents, namely how Carothers had inherited Thucydus from his father and how he had travelled all the way to New Orleans and paid a high price for Eunice as a wife for -- Just as Ike is about to pronounce the name Thucydus, he gets blocked by a sudden intuitive comprehension of Tomasina's real relationship to Carothers. The thought *"His own*

daughter His own daughter. No No Not even him" runs through his mind while "the old frail pages seemed to turn of their own accord... back to that one where the white man... who never went anywhere... and who did not need another slave, had gone all the way to New Orleans and bought one" (259).

22 Although no entries explicitly mention miscegenation or incest, "if we imitate Ike by ourselves turning back to the ledger entries, we will be able to see with what a remarkable wealth of detail they support the discovery that he has made."[7] They reveal the high price paid for Eunice, the two years that elapsed between her purchase and her marriage to Thucydus, Tomasina's birth less than a year later, Eunice's death by suicide six months before Terrel's birth, Thucydus' refusal of his inheritance, Terrel's legacy. In addition, Terrel was still alive when Ike was ten years old so "he knew from his own observation and memory that there had already been some white in Tomey's Terrel's blood before his father gave him the rest of it" (259). Ike is thus convinced that Carothers purchased Eunice not as a costly wife for Thucydus but as a concubine for himself, making her subject to his sexual as well as his racial domination. After she became pregnant, he married her to Thucydus and apparently felt no further obligation to her or acknowledged any ties of kinship with Tomasina. When Eunice realized that her daughter by Old Carothers had in turn become pregnant with his child, she committed suicide.

23 At this point, Ike experiences a moment of tumultuous insight leading to feelings of pain, pity, and grief:

> looking down at the yellowed page spread beneath the yellow glow of the lantern... he seemed to see [Eunice] actually walking into the icy creek on that Christmas day six months before her daughter's and her lover's (*Her first lover's* he thought. *Her first*) child was born, solitary, inflexible, griefless, ceremonial, in formal and succinct repudiation of grief and despair who had already had to repudiate belief and hope (259)

24 Ike now understands that in all of his actions, Carothers engaged in a total exploitation of his slaves no matter how closely involved they were in his life and even despite any existing blood ties, consistently refusing to grant them recognition as an "other" in the sense of a being with an autonomous selfhood.

25 In a world where behavior such as that of Carothers toward Eunice, Tomasina, and Terrel is sanctioned by the dominant authoritative discourse, which may not be challenged and so has the status of taboo, the blacks cannot easily introduce alternative discourses. They can only communicate their dissent by silent actions and hope for a sensitive recipient of their nonverbal message in the present or future. Eunice chooses suicide as her response to the tragic consequences of the system on her family. Thucydus accepts neither the small piece of land he inherited from Carothers nor the freedom offered by Buck and Buddy because he prefers to buy his freedom with his own labor. What "speaks" for him are those five pages in the ledgers which record over the course of almost five years "the slow, day-by-day accrument of the wages allowed him and the food and clothing... charged against the slowly yet steadily mounting sum of balance... on to the double pen-stroke closing the final entry" (255). At the age of sixty-five, he leaves the plantation free of all connections to the McCaslins, moral as well as economic. Terrel remains but neglects to claim his legacy, an "oversight" repeated in various forms by his children Jim and Fonsiba. Money is not the main issue. What they deserve and would like to demand is a more global recompense "not just for the lost wages, the lost land, the abused bodies,

the broken families, but also for the voices and words stolen from them: the power to *represent themselves.*"[8]

26 The nature of authoritative discourse, which "permits no play with the context framing it, no play with its borders, no gradual and flexible transitions, no spontaneously creative stylizing variants on it" (*DI* 343), also explains the inadequacy of Buck and Buddy's attempts to distance themselves from their society's hegemonic system by disobeying some of its crucial precepts. After Carothers' death in 1837, their first action is to offer freedom to some of their slaves. Then they move into a log cabin which they build without using slave labor and they send the slaves to live in the plantation mansion. They parody the conventional practice of locking up slaves at night by nailing shut the front door of the mansion each evening while allowing the slaves to slip out by the back door and go about their business until morning. Nevertheless, even if their behavior clearly suggests they would like to repudiate slavery or at least to make amends for some of its injustices, they remain incapable of recognizing the slaves' full humanity. They are touched by Eunice's death but can still debate about whether a black person could ever have thought of "*drownding him self*" as if she were not an individual with particular hopes and sorrows but a member of a stereotyped and subhuman category. Although they free Terrel and establish legacies for his children, they never publicly acknowledge him as a half-brother; he is not allowed to call himself a McCaslin and his children take the name of Beauchamp after their mother's former owner. Finally, they seem reluctant to -
continue the family dynasty but Buck eventually marries and he and his wife move into the mansion where Ike is born and grows up identified as the sole McCaslin heir.

27 One of Ike's initial responses to what he learns from the ledgers is an attempt to fulfill the financial obligations of the white McCaslins toward his part-black kin, specifically toward Terrel's children. In 1885, Jim, who had grown up alongside Ike on the plantation and in the wilderness but had no special ties to him either as a relative or as a companion, vanishes on the eve of his twenty-first birthday. Ike follows news of his whereabouts as far as Tennessee and when he returns home with his mission unaccomplished, he deposits Jim's share of the legacy in the bank. As he records the details of his unsuccessful search in the ledgers, he is dismayed to find that "his own hand ... queerly enough resembling neither his father's nor his uncle's nor even McCaslin's, ... [is] like that of his grandfather's save for the spelling" (261). A year later, Ike locates Fonsiba living with her husband, a black man from the North, on a farm in Arkansas that he got as a grant from the federal government. The husband seems oblivious to the amount of work that needs to be done if he and his wife are to survive the winter since the cabin is in disrepair, the fields are unplowed and the stockyard is empty. Ike is also disturbed to find that Fonsiba acts as if he were an old-time vigilante and she a runaway slave: "she had not moved, she did not even seem to breathe or to be alive except her eyes watching him... without alarm, without recognition, without hope" (268). Ike can fulfill his socioethical responsibilities by going to the local bank and arranging for Fonsiba to receive her legacy in small regular installments so that "for twenty-eight years at least she would not starve" (268). But he cannot so easily assuage his sense of moral guilt for the wrongs committed by his ancestors. The role of trustee of the McCaslin legacy is uncongenial because it identifies him too closely with the system -- and the discourse -- he condemns for its evil and injustices.

* * *

28 Ike's reading of the plantation ledgers not only starts him on his way toward rejecting the discourses and worldview characteristic of his family's tradition but also sets the stage for his process of assimilating Biblical discourse as internally persuasive.[9] The episode can thus be considered both as a threshold experience and as a scene of conversion dramatizing the "reorientation of the soul of an individual, his deliberate turning from indifference or from an earlier form of piety, a turning which implies a consciousness that a great change is involved, that the old was wrong and the new is right."[10]

29 The firm link between Ike's social conscience and his religious beliefs is emphasized by Faulkner when he likens the ledgers to the Holy Writ:

> To [Ike] it was as though the ledgers in their scarred cracked leather bindings were being lifted down one by one in their fading sequence and spread open on the desk or perhaps upon some apocryphal Bench or even Altar or perhaps before the Throne Itself for the last perusal and contemplation and refreshment of the Allknowledgeable before the yellowed pages and brown thin ink in which was recorded the injustice and a little at least of its amelioration and restitution faded back forever into the anonymous communal original dust. (250)

30 Surely, this scene is intended to call to mind Augustine's conversion in the garden in Milan. Upon hearing a child's voice chanting "tolle, lege,""take it and read," Augustine opens Paul's *Epistle to the Romans* and finds a way out of the spiritual crisis that has been troubling him for some time when he reads with new understanding the words "spend no more thought on nature and nature's appetites" (*Confessions* VIII, xii, 29).[11] In like manner, what Ike reads enters his consciousness and gradually transforms his set of values, allowing him to believe there is a Divine purpose which transcends family and regional heritage and which authorizes him to break with the traditional patterns of behavior. The change in Ike resulting from the "revelations" contained in the ledgers is so definitive "he would never need look at the ledgers again nor did he; the yellowed pages in their fading and implacable succession were as much a part of his consciousness and would remain so forever as his own nativity" (259).

31 The struggle between the voice of Ike's conscience, shaped by his internally persuasive discourses, and the voices expressing his society's authoritative discourses that likewise sound in his mind, leads to his conversation with Cass in the commissary on the eve of his twenty-first birthday when he was supposed to have taken possession of the McCaslin plantation and mansion. Formally and conceptually, this conversation can be viewed as a modern reworking of the chronotope of confessional self-accounting as defined by Bakhtin:

> When my act is regulated by the ought-to-be as such, when it evaluates its own objects immediately in the categories of good and evil, ... that is, when my act is a specifically ethical act, then my reflection upon it and my account of it start determining me and involve my determinateness.Remorse is translated from the psychological plane (chagrin) to the creative-formal plane (repentance, self-condemnation), thus becoming a principle that organizes and gives form to inner life -- a principle of seeing and fixating oneself axiologically. Wherever there is an attempt to fixate oneself in repentant tones in the light of the ethical ought-to-be, the first essential form of verbal objectification of life and personality... arises: confession as an accounting rendered to oneself for one's own life. (*A&A* 141)[12]

32 The most revealing image of this chronotope is the chamber of memory where the speaking person summarizes his spiritual progress from a point in the past up to a moment of great change related to some form of conversion, continuing on to the present and looking toward the future. Ike tells his story at that point in time where his past,

present, and future converge, a point just beyond the ethical and religious crisis which has revealed to his consciousness a previously hidden purpose and direction. The past is important because his crisis was precipitated by what he learned of his family history; the present is essential because he is revealing the current state of his "self" and explaining his intentions; the future is emphasized in light of how his life will be from now on.

33 That Ike's explanation of his decision to relinquish his material legacy while taking on the spiritual burden of his inherited guilt is properly viewed as a confessional self-accounting is revealed when he tells Cass:

> Let me talk now. I'm trying to explain to the head of my family something which I have got to do which I dont quite understand myself, not in justification of it but to explain it if I can. I could say I dont know why I must do it but that I do know I have got to because I have got myself to live with for the rest of my life and all I want is peace to do it in. (275)

34 The opening of this passage expresses a conception of the formation of the self through the construction of a narration about personal beliefs and actions that gains additional validity as speech oriented toward an "other." Bakhtin described the special relationship of the listener and the speaker in a confession as "an event of interaction among consciousnesses... I cannot manage without another; I cannot become myself without another, I must find myself in another by finding another in myself (in mutual reflection and mutual acceptance). Justification cannot be *self*-justification, recognition cannot be *self*-recognition" (*PDP* 287-288).[13] Ike is convinced his decision has to be his own, arising from and responding to his deepest self. At the same time, he feels impelled to explain his decision to Cass, as his counselor and one of his father-figures. By identifying Cass as the head of his family, Ike also implies that his confession is addressed to the community, specifically, to Southern plantation owners. This is an appropriate concern because confession has always involved finding an authentic and proper way to express the most private thoughts, feelings, and beliefs to a particular audience. Saint Augustine reflected on this issue when he asked: "To whom do I tell these things? Not to you my God. But before you I declare this to my race, the human race, though only a tiny part can light on this composition of mine. And why do I include this episode? It is that I and any of my readers may reflect on the great depth from which we have to cry to you. Nothing is nearer to your ears than a confessing heart and a life grounded in faith" (*Confessions* II, iii, 5).

35 Finally, Ike's insistent "I have myself to live with for the rest of my life and all I want is peace to do it in" expresses not only his profound desire for self-renewal but also his firm determination to act in accordance with what he holds to be a higher value. He knows his confession ultimately regards his inner self in relation to God. This aspect, too, evokes the confessional self-accounting during which self-awareness is achieved at the most inward level only in recognition of a Divine Other, and conversely, only in the depths of the self can the individual discover a paradoxical nearness to that Other. As Bakhtin says, "Outside God, outside the bounds of trust in absolute otherness, self-consciousness and self-utterance are impossible, and they are impossible not because they would be senseless practically, but because trust in God is an immanent constitutive moment of pure self-consciousness and self-expression" (*A&A* 144). All these fundamental elements of confessional self-accounting chronotopically shape the form and meaning of the conversation in the commissary and help determine the nature of the relationship between Ike and Cass.

36 The first bit of dialogue centers on the issue of land ownership and opens with Cass's reply to Ike's unreported statement ("then he was twenty-one He could say it") that he intends to relinquish his right to inherit the McCaslin plantation and mansion: "Relinquish. You, the direct male descendant of him who saw the opportunity and took it, bought the land, took the land, got the land no matter how, ... translated it into something to bequeath to his children, worthy of bequeathment for his descendants' ease and security and pride and to perpetuate his name and accomplishments" (245). Espousing the consensus views on property ownership and indifferent to any wrongs committed in the acquiring or consolidation of possession, Cass chooses to build on what his forebears have accomplished and attributes great importance to the McCaslin lineage and legacy. He firmly believes that Ike -- as the oldest, most direct, legitimate, white, male McCaslin -- should take his place in the genealogical line by assuming responsibility for what his grandfather bequeathed.

37 Ike objects to Cass's reasoning on two counts. Having assimilated the Indians' sacral view of nature as internally persuasive, he informs Cass that the land "was never mine to repudiate... because it was never old Ikkemotubbe's to sell to Grandfather for bequeathment and repudiation... the man who bought it bought nothing" (245-246). In addition, he points to ownership of the land as the source of the sins of racial injustice and avidity. He envisions Western civilization as living under a curse caused by failure to respect the terms of the trusteeship granted by God over the land. In his mind, the covenant recorded in *Genesis* I 26 + 28 by which God gave man "dominion over fish, sea, birds, all living things" did not authorize individuals to consider parts of creation as personal property forever but meant that the land was humanity's common heritage and that each individual's labor was to be respected. He believes that if each individual or group would take only what is required for survival, injustices toward others would no longer exist. Impatient with Ike's arguments, Cass says that even if there was a time when land was communal, now one must live according to the conventions of property ownership because there is no way to put into practice an ideal of equality and sharing. With respect to Ike's references to the Scriptures, he notes that, ever since man was expelled from Eden, human society has been based on ownership of land. The contrasting positions taken by Ike and Cass on the proper connection between human beings and the natural environment represent two sides of a dialectic in which individuals believe either in the inevitability of nature's subjection to the self or in a human-land relationship based on interdependence and "the communal anonymity of brotherhood" (246).[14] What Ike adds to this philosophical debate is a stress on the easy shift from exploitation of the land to the enslavement of human beings.

38 Another important point of divergence between Cass and Ike is whether the moving force in history is God or man. For Ike, history is neither blind fate nor simply a linear sequence of cause and effect but has a higher purpose which he understands as the will of God working through the activity of human wills toward a predetermined end. Such a conceptualization of history, Collingwood explains, posits that "in one sense man is the agent throughout history, for everything that happens in history happens through his will; in another sense God is the sole agent, for it is only by the working of God's providence that the operation of man's will at any given moment leads to *this* result, and not to a different one."[15] Ike, in fact, asserts that God has been waiting for mankind to behave in accordance with His will whereas human history from the Garden of Eden to the present has been a series of lost opportunities to establish a proper relationship with

the land and with other people, and through this, with God himself. For this failing, human history has been a history of suffering. Over the millennia, each group that "dispossessed" God by using the land for cruel and selfish purposes was eventually "dispossessed" of the land it ravished by God Himself who then turned His attention to another group. The latest opportunity "where a nation of people could be founded in humility and pity and sufferance and pride of one to another" (247) was the New World. But first the Indians and then the white settlers ignored the covenant and repeated the old sins.

39 Cass instead argues that what man has achieved, positively or negatively, has determined the course of human affairs. He cannot read a Divine purpose in history and, if there is one, it has failed. He asks what God has been doing while humanity disobeyed His laws: "this Arbiter, this Architect, this Umpire -- condoned -- or did He? looked down and saw -- or did He? Or at least did nothing: saw, and could not, or did not see; saw, and would not, or perhaps He would not see -- perverse, impotent, or blind: which?" (247).

40 Without answering Cass's question but nonetheless keeping it in mind as he constructs his reply, Ike adds a new element to his discussion of providential history by advancing the idea that perhaps God has chosen the McCaslin family as a source of regeneration and that he himself may be an instrument in the fulfillment of God's plan. He says, "maybe He saw already in Grandfather the seed progenitive of the three generations He saw it would take to set at least some of His lowly people free" (248). Subsequently (after the flashback to his reading of the ledgers and to his searches for Jim and Fonsiba) he adds "Yes. If He could see Father and Uncle Buddy in Grandfather He must have seen me too. -- an Isaac born into a later life than Abraham's and repudiating immolation: fatherless and therefore safe declining the altar because maybe this time the exasperated Hand might not supply the kid –" (270-271).

41 Cass is puzzled by this assertion which perhaps discloses a coherent meaning only if placed in the context of the discourses -- secular and spiritual, authoritative and internally persuasive -- in conflict in Ike's consciousness. Ike would read the story in *Genesis* 22, 1-14 with emphasis on Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac (his sole legitimate heir) in proof of his faith and trust in God. And he would feel as if Cass (one of his surrogate fathers) wants him to sacrifice himself as a sign of his allegiance to the practices and beliefs of his progenitors. Ike refuses to step into the role prescribed for him by the authoritative discourse of the Southern system because for him this would be an act signifying his willingness to transgress his principles for something he does not believe in. He is convinced that if he accepts the sacrificial role he cannot be "saved." Once he gets involved in the system there is nothing he can do to maintain his moral rectitude and God will not look favorably on someone who knowingly enters into an immoral situation.

42 During these phases of their conversation, Cass tries to integrate Ike into the vision he has of society-at-large while Ike, who views the world from the unique position of his subjectivity and in the context of his inner spiritual quest, rebels against this attempt to ignore his specificity as an individual. Yet, Ike's utterances are permeated with an intense sensitivity toward Cass's anticipated responses and with Cass's reactions to his theories of self, God and society. The link between the two men is stressed by the way their observations flow into each other, by how readily Ike can interpret Cass's attitude through a look, gesture, or exclamation such as "Ah," and by Ike's repeated anticipation of Cass's ideas – "I know what you are going to say" (196, 198, 215).

43 The source of Ike's apparent ambiguity in claiming that his ideas regard only his intimate being while simultaneously provoking Cass's reaction lies in the special interaction between the self and the other in a confessional self-accounting. In this kind of interaction, the "self" needs to break through to its own purest essence and express that essence without fear or shame that others may evaluate it negatively or be shocked by it. The individual who continues to wear the *mask* designed to obtain the other's approval (who exists for himself only in the eyes of the other) cannot utter a true confession. Nevertheless, to achieve this honest and profound "I for myself" the self cannot rely wholly on itself but needs to interact dialogically with another who gives voice to the very views and beliefs the speaker wishes to resist or to embrace. As Bakhtin writes:

> A pure, axiologically solitary relationship to myself--this is what constitutes the ultimate limit toward which confessional self-accounting strives by overcoming all the transgredient moments of justification and valuation that are possible in the consciousness of other people.And on the way toward this ultimate limit the *other* may be needed as a judge who must judge me the way I judge myself, without aestheticizing me; he may be needed in order to destroy his possible influence upon my self-evaluation, that is, in order to enable me, by way of self-abasement before him, to liberate myself from that possible influence exerted by his valuating position outside me and the possibilities associated with this position (to be unafraid of the opinions of others, to overcome my fear of shame). (*A&A* 142)

44 The complicated relationship between the speaking self and its immediate other in this conversation/confessional self-accounting likewise characterizes their discussion of the Civil War. In keeping with his general ideas about history, Ike comprehends the war as an element of a Divine plan intended to redeem the South from the sin of slavery. His reading of Southern history envisions God waiting to see if the planters would eliminate slavery of their own initiative. He says God knew that some men opposed slavery as an intellectual abstraction and that others took an anti-slavery position for political expediency and was not satisfied with these responses because He wanted someone to oppose slavery as a moral issue touching the human heart. He imagines that just as God was about to abandon the South, He heard the voice of John Brown saying "*I am just against the weak because they are niggers being held in bondage by the strong just because they are white*" (272) and, turning His face once more to the South, God saw that many white women nursed sick slaves and that some men, like Buck and Buddy, were trying to break away from the slaveholding mentality. On the strength of these signs of sensitivity, God almost miraculously brought on the Civil War and assured the defeat of the South. It was a stern and loving act based on God's knowledge that *"Apparently they can learn nothing save through suffering, remember nothing save when underlined in blood"* (273). Viewing the Civil War in light of Providential history and in terms of Christian beliefs about salvation has led Ike to speculate that the War may have been allowed to occur in order to foster moral regeneration and consequently the establishment of more just and humane social and economic practices in the South.

45 Cass now concedes that historical events may unfold in some systematic way but he denies that the war can be seen as "providential." Despite this, he gets caught up in Ike's recitation and willingly joins him in a "duet" praising the courage of the Southerners during the war and recalling the tribulations and chaos of the Reconstruction era. As the narration approaches the present moment, a gesture by Cass draws the focus back to the McCaslin ledgers which he "lifted... down daily now to write into them the continuation of that record which two hundred years had not been enough to complete and another

hundred would not be enough to discharge; that chronicle which was a whole land in miniature, which multiplied and compounded was the entire South, twenty-three years after surrender and twenty-four from emancipation“ (280). The column of figures recording the supplies and clothing given to the tenants and sharecroppers and the column tallying the cotton they grew form “the two threads frail as truth and impalpable as equators yet cable-strong to bind for life them who made the cotton to the land their sweat fell on“ (281). Even now, long after the Civil War, the authoritative discourse that had served to justify the institution of slavery retains its hegemonic power, perpetuating black bondage in the form of sharecropping and tenant farming and giving rise to new expressions of racism. With this shared realization, Cass, whose role in society maintains the status quo, and Ike, who does not feel irrevocably bound to the traditions of his ancestors or the legal codes of his society and who wants to separate himself from the injustice and inhumanity of the system, once again realize that the gap between them remains unbridged.

46 Soon after, they reach an even more serious impasse not only in terms of their contradictory ideas but in the more fundamental sense of being able to communicate. Ike declares that as long as the whites continue to feel authorized to exploit the blacks, God will permit the blacks to remain in socioeconomic bondage and that the blacks will endure the duration of this “curse“ because --- At this point, he pauses almost imperceptibly:

> it was not a pause, barely a falter even, possibly appreciable only to himself, as if he couldn't speak even to McCaslin, even to explain his repudiation, that which to him too, even in the act of escaping (and maybe this was the reality and the truth of his need to escape) was heresy (281)

47 In all probability, what Ike was about to say was something only he could enunciate and evaluate, something to which Cass could not grant validity as a world view due to his close allegiance to the received wisdom of his region’s authoritative discourse. During his pause, Ike reflects that, in light of that discourse, his decision to relinquish his inheritance may easily be interpreted by Cass as an evasion of responsibility. Ike has a different conception of his decision. What impels him is a conviction that he needs to remove himself from the endless process of possession and dispossession in order to expiate for that very process. For him, this is a positive action, not an “escape.“ Besides, he realizes that

> even in escaping he was taking with him more of that evil and unregenerate old man who could summon, because she was his property, a human being because she was old enough and female, to his widower’s house and get a child on her and then dismiss her because she was of an inferior race, and then bequeath a thousand dollars to the infant because he would be dead then and wouldn’t have to pay it. (281)

48 This image of a self brutally dominating an other and of the reification of an other by a self who feels superior to any code of moral behavior is Ike’s emblem of what his heritage means ethically and spiritually. Even if he “escapes“ accepting responsibilities that would oblige him to participate in a mode of life based on the ascendancy of some over others, he cannot escape the constant sting of such past evil or the need to expiate it.

49 Ike’s pause (“as if he couldn’t speak even to Cass“) and the thoughts which enter his mind at that moment again make us realize his speech in the commissary has a dimension which goes beyond his immediate conversation with Cass. Ike’s discourse, like all discourse according to Bakhtin, “wants to be *heard*“ and if the listener who is physically

present cannot respond or at best can offer only "responsive understanding of limited depth," this discourse "does not stop at *immediate* understanding but presses on further and further" until it locates a point of understanding (*SpG* 127). Bakhtin posits that in addition to the speaker and the listener, every utterance also involves a third party, a sort of supreme listener "whose absolutely just responsive understanding is presumed, either in some metaphysical distance or in distant historical time." He calls this invisibly present figure the *superaddressee* and asserts that it is "a constitutive aspect of the whole utterance, who, under deeper analysis, can be revealed in it" (*SpG* 126-127).

50 The responsive listener Ike seeks is a Divine Third, a special kind of superaddressee understood not only as the recipient of his discourse but also as the source of the values that inform his utterances. Ike's need for this special listener, witness and judge is properly clarified by Bakhtin's insights into the moment when the speaker passes beyond its immediate listener and turns to God:

> The negation of any justification in *this* world is transformed into a need for *religious* justification... Pure self-accounting -- that is, addressing oneself axiologically only to oneself in absolute solitariness -- is impossible; pure self-accounting is an ultimate limit which is balanced by another ultimate limit -- by confession, that is, the petitionary advertedness outward from oneself, toward God... One can live and gain consciousness of oneself neither *under a guarantee* nor *in a void* (an axiological guarantee and an axiological void), but only *in faith.*(*A&A* 143-144)

51 Refusing to assume responsibility for the McCaslin legacy is, for Ike, equivalent to acting in accordance with his highest ethical and moral ideals. He sees it as an act of expiation for the wrongs of the past and of the present, an act directed to God in the hope it will be favorably received and ultimately rewarded.[16] In truth, proper atonement requires human initiative in returning to God who will respond by completing the process of purification ultimately leading to the reintegration of the fragmented human self and the restoration of a wholesome relationship between humans and God.Ike is ready to accept the misunderstanding that will inevitably accompany his renunciation because he has faith that the future will prove him right. As he tells Cass, "It will be long. I have never said otherwise.But it will be all right because they will endure" (286).[17]

52 In elucidating the nature of Ike's "heresy," critics tend to focus on the phrase pronounced immediately after the pause: "[the Blacks] are better than we are" (281). These commentators say that even for Ike this assertion smells of heresy and that his awareness of his own ambiguity on this matter highlights for him his continuing resemblance to Carothers and his entrapment in the world-view he wishes he could escape.[18] I believe we are justified in considering Ike's remark part of a larger "heresy" -- where heresy is intended in the full sense of the word as a deviation from the common forms of thinking, which in this case are those embraced by Cass. This broader interpretation seems more consonant with the dialogic nature of their relationship, since during their conversation, they "never argue over *separate points*, but always over *whole points of view*, inserting themselves and their entire idea into even the briefest exchange. They almost never dismember or analyze their integral ideational position" (*PDP* 96). Ike's heresy, in fact, grows out of his whole spiritual orientation and socioethical world view. It expresses his dissent from his society's authoritative discourse and from conventional ideas about ownership; it shows he has a different conception of himself as a human being and of the value of other human beings than Carothers had and than he could express as plantation

owner; it indicates his willingness to act on his religious beliefs by atoning for the sins of his forefathers.

53 Another crucial confrontation ensues when Cass ironically concedes a point in favor of Ike: "'Habet then.--So this land is, indubitably, of and by itself cursed'" (284). Then, again with a gesture, Cass evokes not only the ledgers but the entire plantation economy: "that whole edifice intricate and complex and founded upon injustice and erected by ruthless rapacity and carried on even yet with at times downright savagery... solvent and efficient and intact and still increasing so long as McCaslin and his McCaslin successors lasted" (285). Although Cass acknowledges the myriad injustices of the system, he believes that the very survival of the McCaslin plantation over the decades and the fact that it now sustains the lives of all its white and black inhabitants are achievements that should not be undervalued. Running the plantation is a worthwhile task which should devolve on the legal and legitimate heir. Granting Cass's point that the plantation of itself is under no curse, Ike continues to rivet his attention on moral issues: "'Habet too. Because that's it: not the land, but us'" (285). Cass retaliates that Ike still owes allegiance to the laws of patrilineal succession. But for the same moral and ethical reasons that exonerate him from accepting the material legacy, Ike denies he need feel any sense of obligation to a tainted genealogical imperative. Exasperated, Cass sarcastically observes: "So I repudiate too. I would deny even if I knew it were true. I would have to. Even you can see that I could do no else. I am what I am; I will be always what I was born and have always been" (286). He maintains that although humans have a range of free choice, their actual decisions and actions fall within certain limits. What is logically desirable may not be historically feasible in a given time, place, and society. As a matter of fact, he attributes the evils of slavery and of more recent forms of injustice to the circumstances of Southern society which generated a system that assigned the Black population an irrevocably lower place in the socioeconomic hierarchy. Undoubtedly, Cass's vision underplays the role of choice in the continuation of wrongdoing, fails to see how evil insinuates itself into the human spirit, and does not recognize that without freedom there is neither responsibility nor guilt.

54 To each of Cass's arguments about what he considers Ike's legal, social, and genealogical obligations, Ike replies "I am free." In order to understand the full meaning of his refrain, it is important to note that from the start of the conversation, he does not frame the issue of his relinquishment in terms of what he can do to affect the objective situation in the South. He does not speak about whether he can intervene directly to ameliorate the lives of the Blacks and establish more just social and economic practices. Attempting to reform Southern plantation society may be a heroic endeavor but this means working in a system that is corrupt and wrong. Underlying Ike's choice is the conviction that only when everyone assumes guilt for evil can change begin to occur. He is convinced that if everyone would recognize this generalized guilt and work to expiate it in their own lives, rather than condemning it in others or perpetuating it with various justifications about the power of circumstances, the end result would be the triumph of good over evil. By avoiding an active life as landowner and devoting himself to inner purification, he intends to serve as a living reminder that until members of the white ruling class revolutionize their inner life, injustices in the public sphere will persist and the "curse" will never be lifted. The kind of atonement Ike strives for can be explained by the theory of moral influence which describes the Atonement as something accomplished in the

minds and hearts of those in whom Christ's message and example of love engender a corresponding response.

55 Having concluded his conversation with Cass and sitting peacefully in his rented room, Ike meditates on the mystery of the individual development of a human being:

> thinking and not for the first time how much it takes to compound a man (Isaac McCaslin for instance) and of the devious intricate choosing yet unerring path that man's... spirit takes among all that mass to make him at last what he is to be, not only to the astonishment of them... who believed they had shaped him, but to Isaac McCaslin too. (294-295)

56 To achieve his sense of selfhood, Ike has had to learn how to orient himself in the "devious intricate choosing yet unerring path" of his individual destiny. His journey toward knowledge has not been guided by a fixed method or route but has unfolded in stages determined by his particular circumstances and experiences as well as his personal decisions with regard to ethical, moral, and spiritual matters. In essence, he has had to define his relationship to his various "legacies": the values of the wilderness imparted by Sam; the McCaslin family's history and its material heritage; the alternate perspectives on Southern reality he discovers in the ledgers; Biblical teachings relative to original sin and expiation. This process has involved awareness of the ideas of others without unquestioning submission to them, assumption of responsibility for actions performed or left unperformed, and belief in a higher and ultimate value that has inspired and guided him. By specifying that Ike reflects on these issues *not for the first time*, Faulkner indicates that his confessional self-accounting has been part of his ongoing effort to comprehend the continuity of his evolution from what he once was to what he has become and, insofar as possible, to understand what went into his making.

NOTES

1. *The Bear* has been read both as the centerpiece of a closely integrated collection of stories, *Go Down, Moses*, and as a separate story in its own right. I consider it here in its individuality.

2. Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, ed. Holquist (Austin: U of Texas P, 1981). Cited parenthetically in the text as *DI*.

3. William Faulkner, *Go Down, Moses* (1942) (New York: Vintage, 1990). Page numbers cited parenthetically in the text refer to this edition.

4. John H. Schaar, "Community or Contract: William Faulkner and the Dual Legacy," in John Diggins and Mark Kann, eds., *The Problem of Authority in America* (Philadelphia: Temple U P, 1981) 98-99.

5. Thomas Merton, "'Baptism in the Forest': Wisdom and Initiation in William Faulkner" in George Panichas, ed., *Mansions of the Spirit: Essays in Literature and Religion* (N Y: Hawthorn Books, 1967) 30. Other relevant discussions of Ike's experiences in the forest in terms of myth are John Lydenberg, "Nature Myth in Faulkner's 'The Bear'," *American Literature* 24 (1952): 62-72 and David H. Evans "Taking the Place of Nature: 'The Bear' and the Incarnation of America," in Donald Kartiganer and Ann Abadie, eds., *Faulkner and the Natural World: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha* (Jackson: U P of Mississippi, 1999) 179-197.

6. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern W. McGee, eds. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas P, 1986). Cited parenthetically in the text as *SpG*.

7. Karl F. Zender, "Reading in 'The Bear'," *Faulkner Studies* 1 (1980): 92. The "correctness" of Ike's reading of the ledgers has been a recurring topic in critical commentary on *The Bear* of which the following is a sampling. Richard King, in *A Southern Renaissance: The Cultural Awakening of the American South, 1930-1955* (Oxford: Oxford U P, 1980), describes Ike's investigation of the family ledgers as "the best example we have in American literature of the moral task of the historical consciousness and the most graphic analogue of the psychoanalytic task of transforming repetitions into recollections" (135). John T. Matthew, in *The Play of Faulkner's Language* (Ithaca: Cornell U P, 1982), finds that Ike's "creative reading" is an attempt "to confront and contradict his grandfather" (264). Eric Sundquist, in *Faulkner: The House Divided* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U P, 1983), considers the ledgers "a concentrated representation, a mysterious and seemingly sacred account of acts and passions whose symbolic value draws into itself and envelops the interpretation it necessitates" (137). Carl Rollyson, in *Uses of the Past in the Novels of William Faulkner* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research P, 1984), likens Ike to a "critical historian" who offers an interpretation of the ledgers that is "not simply compatible with the evidence" but constitutes "the best reading" (131). Richard Godden and Noel Polk, in "Reading the Ledgers," *Mississippi Quarterly* 55 (2002): 301-359, argue that Ike deliberately misreads the ledgers and repudiates his legacy for the wrong reasons. They conclude that "the ledgers are... uninterpretable on such matters from which Isaac desperately wants to wring meaning."

8. John Carlos Rowe, "The African-American Voice in Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*," in J. Gerald Kennedy, ed., *Modern American Short Story Sequences: Composite Fiction and Fictive Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1995) 84.

9. To say that Biblical discourse can become internally persuasive is not to deny its status as the quintessentially Authoritative Word. For discussions of the non-monologic quality of Biblical discourse see Robert Polzin, "Dialogic Imagination in the Book of Deuteronomy," *Studies in Twentieth Century Literature* 9 (1984): 135-144; Walter Reed, *Dialogics of the Word: The Bible as Literature According to Bakhtin* (New York: Oxford U P, 1993) 14-18; Carol A. Newsom, "Bakhtin, the Bible, and Dialogic Truth," *The Journal of Religion* 76 (1996): 290-307.

10. A. D. Nock, *Conversion: The Old and New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (London: Oxford U P, 1933) 7.

11. Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (London: Oxford U P,1991).

12. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, trans. Vadim Liapunov, eds. Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov (Austin: U of Texas P 1990). Cited parenthetically in the text as *A&A*.

13. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1984). Cited parenthetically in the text as *PDP.*

14. The philosophical underpinnings of Ike's views on land ownership are discussed by Dale Breaden, "William Faulkner and the Land," *American Quarterly* 10 (1958): 344-357 and Judith Wittenberg, "*Go Down, Moses* and the Discourse of Environmentalism," in Linda Wagner-Martin, ed., *New Essays on Go Down, Moses* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1996) 49-72.

15. R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (London: Oxford U P, 1956) 48. Also see Warren Akin, "Providence and the Structure of *Go Down, Moses,*"*Southern Review* 18 (1982): 495-505.

16. James Walter, "Expiation and History: Ike McCaslin and the Mystery of Providence," *Louisiana Studies* 10 (1971): 266.

17. Critics' views on Ike's relinquishment are divided. Among those who see it as an evasion of responsibility are Michael Millgate in *The Achievement of William Faulkner* (New York: Random House, 1966) 209; Dirk Kuyk in *Threads Cable-Strong: William Faulkner's Go Down, Moses* (Lewisburg: Bucknell U P, 1983) 140; Evelyn Jaffe Schreiber in *Subversive Voices: Eroticizing the Other in William Faulkner and Toni Morrison* (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 2001) 32-33. More positive views are

expressed by R. W. B. Lewis, "The Hero in the New World: William Faulkner's 'The Bear'," *Kenyon Review*, 13 (1951): 641-660 and Carey Wall, "*Go Down, Moses*: The Collective Action of Redress," *Faulkner-Journal* 7 (1991-1992): 151-74. Richard King, op. cit., 138, suggests that we view Ike's action as morally admirable but politically ineffectual.

18. Representative readings are James Early, *The Making of Go Down Moses* (Dallas: Southern Methodist U P, 1972) and Thadious M. Davis, *Faulkner's "Negro": Art and the Southern Context* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State U P, 1983).

ABSTRACTS

Le présent article explore la dimension éthique et religieuse de The Bear de William Faulkner sous une perspective bakhtinienne. Il définit les chronotopes comme étant des éléments apportant une base narrative quant à la représentation des expériences, des actions et des idées de Ike. Il analyse également la manière dont, au sein des différentes phases de son histoire, chaque chronotope génère différentes conceptions de l'identité individuelle, de l'interaction sociale, des traitements de l'histoire de l'éthique et de la morale. Un autre point important est l'usage de différents types de discours (hégémonique mais marginalisé, socioéconomique mais aussi religieux) qui tissent les visions du monde de Ike et forgent son sens de l'identité. Ces modes de discours sont décisifs pour aider le lecteur à saisir les réactions de Ike, lecteur lui-même du rapport d'enquête sur McCaslin, puis sa décision de répudier ses descendants. Récit confessionnel adressé à soi même, la complexité du raisonnement, l'intensité émotionnelle et la tonalité de plus en plus spirituelle que prend la longue conversation entre Ike et Cass sont ainsi analysées en suivant, pas à pas, les méandres du fil narratif.

AUTHORS

WINIFRED FARRANT BEVILACQUA

Winifred Farrant Bevilacqua, who holds a Ph.D. from the University of Iowa and a D.Litt. from the Università Degli Studi di Milano, is Associate Professor of American Literature at the Università Degli Studi di Torino. She is the author of *Josephine Herbst* and of *Images of the Past: Essays on the American Novel*, the editor of *Fiction by American Women: Recent Views* and has contributed to the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* and *Beacham's Popular World Fiction.* Her essays have appeared in *American Literature*, *Centennial Review*, *Revue Française d'Études Américaines*, *American Studies in Scandinavia, Op. Cit.: Revista de Estudos Anglo-Americanos,Rivista di Studi Anglo-Americani* and *Books at Iowa*.